

# ON OUR SHORT list



ALAN RAFKIN '50

## Breaking the Rules

A list of the greatest comedy television shows of the last 30 years might look something like this: *The Andy Griffith Show*, *I Dream of Jeannie*, *The Donna Reed Show*, *Gomer Pyle*, *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, *Rhoda*, *Love American Style*, *M\*A\*S\*H*, *The Bob Newhart Show*, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *Laverne and Shirley*, *The Love Boat*, and *One Day at a Time*.

Check the credits, and you'll find one name affiliated with all of them: independent producer and director Alan Rafkin—the king of conventional comedy.

But Rafkin, a 1950 graduate of SU's School of Management, has taken a leap into the unorthodox of late. He is directing his third season of *It's Garry Shandling's Show*, the innovative Fox program that breaks television's imaginary fourth wall: Shandling often speaks directly to the viewing audience and asks them for advice.

It's a situation comedy that makes fun of the sitcom format. The offbeat program, which features self-mocking comedian Garry Shandling as a neurotic, 30-something bachelor, frequently requires audience participation.

"The show broke a lot of the rules I was used to," says Rafkin, who began his career as a gofer at CBS in New York in 1953 and worked his way up to directing comedy programs within five years. Rafkin and the entire Shandling show crew were required to make several adjustments, he says. The differences in camera work alone were immense. "The average situation comedy will have somewhere more than 200 camera shots," says Rafkin. "*It's Garry Shandling's Show* averages 30 shots. We use cameras much more precisely, rather than cutting, cutting, cutting."

Rafkin has proven his versatility. Since its premiere, the show has been nominated for several Emmy awards (including directing), a *TV Guide* poll deemed the Shandling show one of the five best comedy series, and the Television Critics Association has named it Best Comedy Series. In addition, Showtime, the pay-cable network, is so pleased with the witty series it has ordered an unprecedented 54 episodes.

—MARY ELLEN MENGUCCI



Sitcom director, Alan Rafkin, and leading man, Garry Shandling

JOANNA CASSIDY '67

## Leading Lady

Joanna Cassidy has played opposite such leading men as Robin Williams, Dabney Coleman, Peter O'Toole, Nick Nolte, and Gene Hackman. Oh, and you can add a rabbit to that list.

Cassidy, a member of SU's Class of 1967, played the bartender Delores in the box office smash *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* She calls the film the most complicated ever made. Cassidy says her co-star Bob Hoskins, the British actor who appeared in each scene with *Rabbit*, made filming easier. "I felt lucky to be working with Hoskins in this kind of film—or any film," she says.

A seasoned television and movie actress,

Cassidy has been particularly busy during the past few years. She began filming for *Club Paradise* with Robin Williams and Peter O'Toole less than three weeks after finishing her TV series *Codename: Foxfire*. Before that, it was the miniseries *Hollywood Wives*. She also starred with Dabney Coleman as Jo Jo White on NBC's *Buffalo Bill* (for which she won a Golden Globe award) and played opposite Nick Nolte and Gene Hackman in the acclaimed political thriller *Under Fire*.

It hasn't all been smooth sailing for the redheaded beauty, who began her career as a model. She landed her first acting role in the 1972 film *The Laughing Policeman*, starring Walter Matthau. But, like most young actresses, she had problems getting a leading role. Between the short-lived TV series *240-Robert* and numerous small TV and movie roles, her longest running role was five episodes on *Falcon Crest*.

But Cassidy's career is moving full-steam ahead now. "I'm over the hump," she says. Since her role in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, Cassidy has starred in 1969 with Mariette Hartley and Keifer Sutherland. And now she is in production for a new feature film titled *The Package*, scheduled for release in late August.

—MARY ELLEN MENGUCCI

CHARLES JOFFE '51

## Good for Woody

If the name Charles Joffe sounds familiar, you must be a Woody Allen fan. Joffe's name has prominently appeared in the credits of each of Allen's films. He's produced them all.

The latest is *New York Stories*, a three-part movie Allen filmed in conjunction with directors Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese. The movie, as with most of Allen's work, was filmed in New York. The story line and actors remain guarded secrets. A release is expected this spring.



Joanna Cassidy, with Bob Hoskins, in *Roger Rabbit*

As producer, Joffe is responsible for putting the project together: hiring the talent, arranging the financing and distribution, working on the marketing and promotion. He calls his relationship with Allen "like a dream. We've worked together for over 30 years so we know each other pretty well," he says.

Joffe met Allen in the fifties when Allen was a struggling comedy writer and Joffe was in the talent management business. Allen approached Joffe and his partner, Jack Rollins, about writing material for two of their clients, Mike Nichols and Elaine May. They weren't interested, but recognized Allen's talent and sensed it was misdirected.

Joffe and Rollins promoted Allen as a stand-up comic. It was a good hunch. When Allen was ready for motion pictures, they were right at his side, as producers of his movies.

Allen wasn't Joffe's only discovery. His talent management firm, which grew to become Rollins Joffe Morra & Brezner, has an exemplary record of boosting careers for green comedians. Their client list reads like a who's who of comics: Robin Williams, Billy Crystal, David Letterman, Martin Short, Martin Mull, and Dick Cavett, among others.

Ironically, Joffe began his career as a talent agent while an undergraduate at SU. He organized his own agency and booked fellow students into local clubs. Among his budding stars were alumni Peter Falk and Jerry Stiller. The business helped pay his way through school and paved the way for his future career. After graduating in 1951, he was offered jobs by big agencies and ultimately he hooked up with longtime partner Rollins.

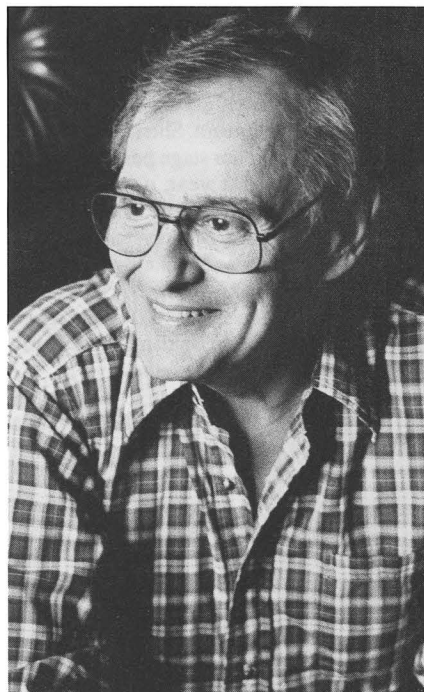
Joffe left Rollins Joffe Morra & Brezner a year and a half ago to pursue a career as an independent producer. He, along with Rollins, retains his business relationship with

Allen, and he's currently looking for other projects in television and film.

In addition, Joffe serves on the board of directors of Odyssey Films, a new film production and distribution company, and teaches a course at UCLA titled "Turning Professional: For Writers, Actors, Directors, and Producers." His main message: if you don't like rejection, forget the entertainment industry.

"It's a business of constant rejection and disappointment," says Joffe. "And hard work. If they think it's a business of just luxury, they're wrong. You're always up at bat."

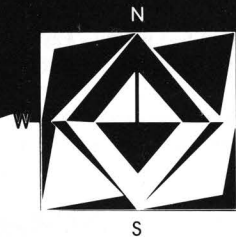
—RENEE GEARHART LEVY



Charles Joffe, the man behind *Woody*

...for those who are no longer students in the traditional sense."

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VANESSA WILLIAMS '86

## Back at the Top

Vanessa Williams began her day with an interview with *People* magazine at her Los Angeles home. She'd spent the entire previous day in a photographer's studio being shot for the story, but that was not enough. *People* wanted more photos—with her husband/manager/publicist Ramon Hervey, and with their year-and-a-half-old daughter, Melanie.

She snuck in a few telephone interviews before catching a quick flight to Sacramento for a guest appearance at a radio party. The station was having a food drive and Williams was there to sign autographs.

The next morning it was back to L.A. to film a profile piece for *Cover Story*, a cable-TV show, then off to Ojai, an hour-and-a-half drive north, for another radio function. This time the station was giving away a dream vacation. Again, Williams was there to sign autographs.

A hectic schedule to be sure, but Williams is not complaining. "I'd much rather have a record on the radio that I have to promote than something I'm begging people to listen to," she says.

She's referring to "The Right Stuff," her first

album, released in July, and the reason behind her demand.

The hot rhythm and blues-oriented album sold about 400,000 copies in 1988 with two tracks cracking the top ten on *Billboard's* R & B chart. Vanessa herself was named best new female artist at the NAACP's Image Awards in December, and has been nominated for two Grammy's: best new artist and best female R&B vocal.

"I appreciate being recognized for my work and my efforts," says the 26-year-old Williams, who has struggled to overcome the tarnished image dogging her since she was dethroned as Miss America nearly five years ago.

Williams's success is no surprise to those who know her. The daughter of two music teachers, she has prepared for a musical career nearly all her life. She could play piano, violin, and flute by age five, and also studied French horn for nine years. As a high school senior she was named a finalist in the prestigious Presidential Scholarship Contest for Drama, which led to her acceptance at SU's musical theater department. She entered a local beauty pageant during her sophomore year, and two pageant titles later became the first black woman to be crowned Miss America. The rest, as they say, is history.

Williams says her notoriety was not an asset in securing a recording contract.

"There was a lot of excess baggage that the person I was approaching had to try to leave and forget," she says. She met with executives of 10 record companies before landing a deal with Wing Records, a division of PolyGram specializing in developing new acts. Her second album is due this summer and a concert tour is in the works.

Williams's acting career is also gaining momentum. She received critical acclaim for her stage performance in *Checkmates* last year, a play she co-starred in with Paul Winfield and Roxy Roker. She co-starred in the NBC movie *The Sex Tape Scandal*, and she's reviewing scripts for feature films. "I'd love to get a role I could really sink my teeth into," she says.

No doubt stamina has brought Williams where she is today. "I knew it was going to be hard," she has said, "but I knew I'd get there eventually. . . . I'm a fighter. I always try to prove that I've got what it takes." Apparently, the Right Stuff.

—RENÉE GEARHART LEVY

MARSHALL GELFAND '50

## The Business of Show Business

In 1961, a relatively unknown folksinging group called Peter, Paul and Mary hired a relatively unknown New York accountant named Marshall Gelfand. The group was an instant success and so was Gelfand.

In no time, Gelfand was serving as business manager to other music industry giants, including Bob Dylan and Neil Diamond. His business continued to center on clients in the entertainment industry, and in 1969 Gelfand opened a second office in Los Angeles.

Today, he serves as managing partner of Gelfand, Rennett & Feldman, the largest international business management company in the entertainment industry. There are 15 partners and 130 employees altogether, located in offices in Los Angeles, New York, Nashville, Palm Springs, and London.

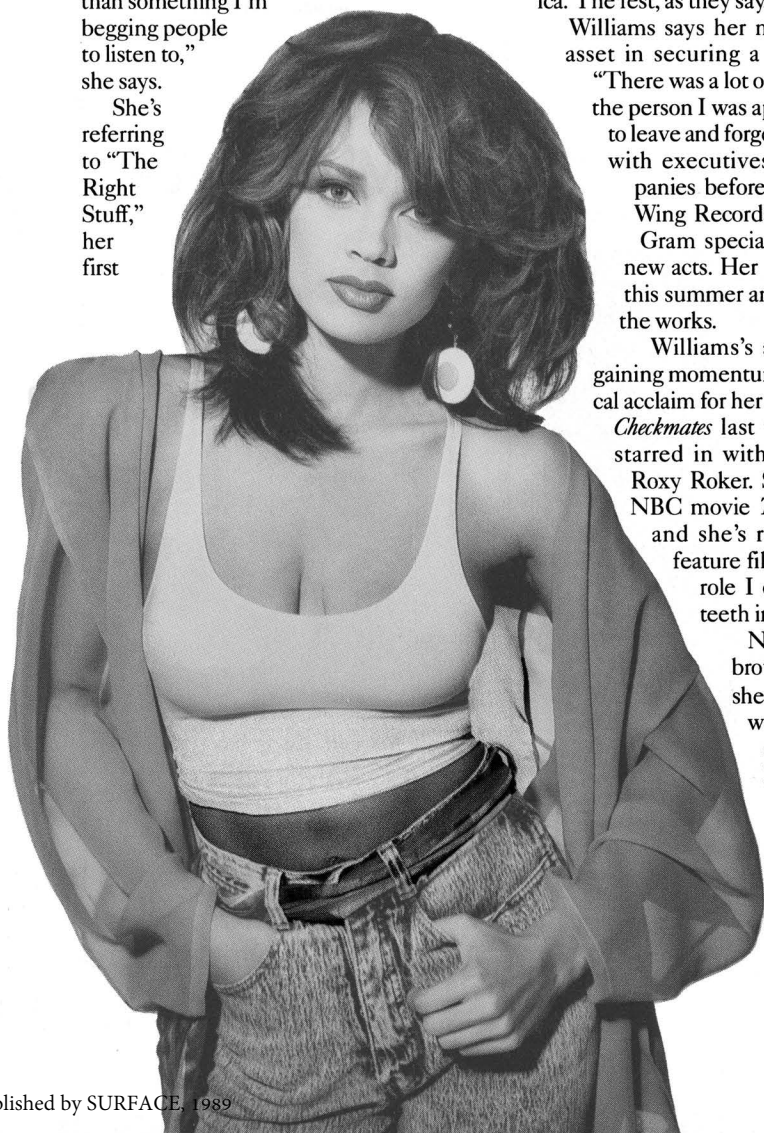
Gelfand, now based in the firm's central office in L.A., works with many of his clients on a one-to-one basis. Often in the entertainment industry, he says, a personality reaches stardom—and subsequent wealth—before really understanding what has hit him. It's Gelfand's job to sit down with a client and help him establish an individual financial strategy. When asked, Gelfand also offers investment and real estate services for the protection and growth of the client's capital.

As business managers, the firm also handles its clients' routine accounting and bookkeeping needs and has the responsibility for reviewing and paying bills, collecting and depositing income, and producing regular financial statements. Furthermore, staff members regularly review contracts and income schedules to monitor the receipt of incoming money. In other words, the firm takes care of money matters so clients can concentrate on their dynamic, sometimes volatile careers.

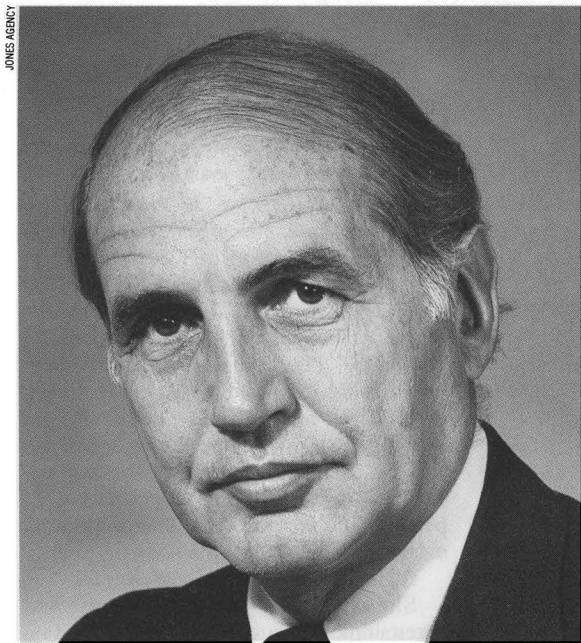
Gelfand's client list is extensive and includes personalities from music, motion pictures, television, literature, and medicine. James Taylor, Diane Keaton, Kris Kristofferson, Debra Winger, and Carly Simon are among his many clients.

A 1950 graduate of SU's School of Management, Gelfand also represents several SU alumni, including TV director Alan Rafkin '50, movie/TV director William Persky '53, and Warner Bros. executive James Miller '64.

—MARY ELLEN MENGUCCI







Marshall Gelfand, business manager of the stars

IRMA KALISH '44

## Just for Laughs

When she took over as producer of *Facts of Life* a few years ago, Irma Ginsberg Kalish found herself on a television series with big problems.

"The show was in its eighth year and there was doubt that we'd last the season," Kalish says. "There had been a series of producers, there were difficulties with some of the actresses, and there was a definite them-versus-us mentality."

Kalish turned it around. "I smoothed troubles over, established effective communications, and helped develop a team spirit. We not only finished that season, but went on to a ninth."

Running a happy show is one of Kalish's greatest strengths. "I like peace and quiet," she says. "I listen to everybody and keep them happy. Some people say you have to be a killer in this business, but I don't find that to be true. I'm not a doormat by any means, but I feel there's always another way to do something. Above all, I want everyone to have a good time."

This past fall she took on a new assignment: executive producer of the popular Saturday evening comedy, *227*. She also has a production development deal with Columbia Pictures Television.

But it was as a writer, not a producer, that Kalish began her Hollywood career, and she and her husband, Austin, still write as a team. A 1944 SU graduate in journalism, Kalish was editor of *Romance Western* magazine when she married and moved to the West Coast. She and her husband began writing comedy for the Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis radio show,

and when the show transferred to television, so did they.

"In those days they said women couldn't write comedy, just soap operas," Kalish recalls. "I know they told themselves I wasn't really doing any of the writing—that my husband was writing and I was only typing. I just smiled and kept on writing."

Kalish has more than 300 scripts to her credit, including the award-winning script for *All in the Family* in which Edith Bunker feared she had breast cancer. Her string of successes includes scripts for *Family Affair*, *The Brian Keith Show*, *F Troop* ("pure fun"), *The Bob Newhart Show*, *Maude*, and *Good Times*.

"Each show has its own personality and you learn it very quickly by reading old scripts and watching it," she says. "If you're good, you can hear the characters' voices in your mind when writing."

Kalish moved into producing with *Good Heavens*, and then went on to produce *Good Times*, *Carter Country*, *Too Close for Comfort*, and *The Facts of Life*.

"Producing gives you more control. Writers have traditionally been the lowest echelon in Hollywood, but being executive producer gives me control over not just my script, but over the show itself."

Kalish explains that her strength is as a negotiator. "I consult with the director, the network people, the studio people, and the actors. I listen to everyone's concerns. Noth-

ing is etched in concrete because I believe there's always another joke, another line. I'm willing to make changes, but I'll fight hard for the integrity of the show."

—CAROL NORTH SCHMUCKLER

JAMES BACON '43

## Friends and Lovers

The day he hit Hollywood in 1948, James Bacon telephoned Humphrey Bogart, merely on the strength of having a mutual acquaintance. But as the Associated Press columnist newly assigned to Tinsel Town, Bacon was not without some clout.

"Bogie invited me to the Polo Lounge for lunch," Bacon recalls. "We met at one o'clock and things quickly got very wet. People kept stopping by the table—Duke Wayne, Errol Flynn, and many others. It turned out to be kind of a long lunch. It lasted 'til two in the morning."

That set the tone for the impish Bacon's four decades in Hollywood. He not only wrote about the stars. He drank with them, attended their weddings and funerals, and heard all their secrets. What he decided to print, however, was strictly up to his journalistic instincts and his fine sense of discretion.

Bacon reached Hollywood via Syracuse, Albany, and Chicago. While working at the *Syracuse Herald Journal* as nighttime state editor, he was a daytime journalism graduate student at SU. He would have graduated with the Class of 1943, but he left to join the AP's Albany bureau. He then served in the Navy, and after the war AP sent him to Chicago and then Hollywood.

Irma Kalish put *The Facts of Life* back on its feet.

His column for AP ran in 8,000 papers. But Bacon was invited everywhere not because of his influence, but because he loved the stars and they just as obviously loved him. An admitted fan, he found all doors open to him. His best friends were Bogie, Duke, Errol, Liz, Frank, Mitch, and Marilyn.

He was supposed to be on Mike Todd's plane the night it crashed, and the next morning, he was the one to break the news to Elizabeth Taylor that her husband was dead and get an exclusive interview. He wrote the first national

story about Marilyn Monroe, recognizing her charisma when she was totally unknown. (He also confesses to having a "fling" with Marilyn and knowing all her secrets.) He encouraged John Wayne to go public with "the Big C" but didn't break the story until Duke was ready. He also knew when a story shouldn't be written. He refused to reveal that Betty Grable was dying, and when someone else wrote about it, Bacon got a tearful call from Grable saying that until she'd read that, she'd thought she was recovering.

"I think I was also the only person ever officially named an 'evil companion,'" Bacon says. "I was with Jackie Gleason when he was shooting *The Toy*, and one day when he supposedly had a light schedule, we drank our lunch. Later, on the set, the director put him in a golf cart to film him chasing Richard Pryor. Gleason drove the cart into the swimming pool and almost drowned. It was the funniest shot in the movie.

"The next day, I was banned from the set because I was an evil companion to Gleason."

Bacon left the AP to write a syndicated column for the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* in 1968, continuing his close associations with the Hollywood greats. He retired in 1986 and today writes a weekly column for a supplement of the *Los Angeles Times*.

Now silver-haired, but with all his high spirits and good old boy charm intact, Bacon is as busy as ever. He's already sold a movie-of-the-week about his days with Al Capone in Chicago, and he's working on a project for PBS. He's also writing his fourth book, a memoir of his escapades in Hollywood.



Reporter James Bacon and good friend Norma Jean

"I found the big stars basically no different from other people. They were down-to-earth people who never took stardom seriously. We had wonderful times. I went all over the world and did everything. I even acted bit parts in more than 600 films. It was the most exciting life I could have imagined."

—CAROL NORTH SCHMUCKLER

CHERYL KAGAN '72

## Publicity Stunts

When *Moonlighting* star Cybill Shepherd delivered her twins last year, Cheryl Kagan stood outside the hospital birthing room with Shepherd's bodyguard, making sure no one from the tabloids, disguised as doctors or nurses, entered the room. When Shepherd went home, Kagan found a secluded exit through the basement and arranged for two imposters—dressed as Shepherd and hubby, bearing dolls wrapped in blankets—to walk out the hospital's main entrance.

All in a day's work for Cheryl Kagan.

She is senior vice president, arts and entertainment group, of Rogers and Cowan, the largest independent public relations agency in the world. "You have to know your clients very well," says Kagan, "because you have to protect them. You become an extended family and you really have to have a good relationship. It's the only way it's going to work."

Kagan handles publicity for an assortment of personalities, TV series, and entertainment-oriented projects. And like any publicist, she spends most of her time on the phone or on sets, trying to coordinate publicity campaigns. "When I'm on a set, I'm usually arranging interviews or getting answers to requests," says the 1972 graduate of the Newhouse School.



When Cybill had twins, publicist Cheryl Kagan diverted the press.

Because her clients rarely lead nine-to-five lives, Kagan doesn't either. She is up at all hours, catching clients between tapings to work out the details of a particular project. "I'm as much a publicist as a special events coordinator," she says. "I have to be. I'm shaping and molding people's careers."

Kagan, whose individual clients include such personalities as Kenny Rogers, the Smothers Brothers, Bruce Boxleitner, and Tony Curtis, joined Rogers and Cowan in 1981. Prior to that, she worked in various capacities for ABC and NBC in New York. Since joining Rogers and Cowan, she has coordinated publicity for such shows as *Moonlighting*, *Baby Boom*, *Miami Vice*, *Crime Story*, and *Houston Nights*. Now she is working on a big promotion campaign for Cybill Shepherd's soon-to-be-released movie, *Chances Are*.

—MARY ELLEN MENGUCI

DAVID TEITELBAUM '82

## a.k.a. Harvey Shine

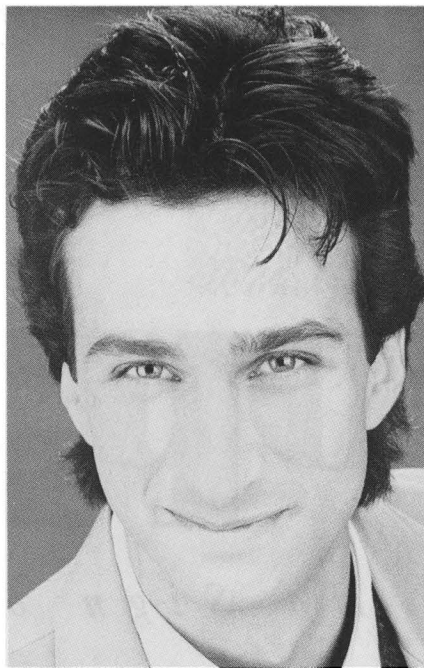
If the name Harvey Shine, famous TV showman and talk show fixture from the fifties, fails to ring a bell, don't worry. He and his impressive career both were dreamed up by David Teitelbaum. Using Shine's wisecracking personality as the star attraction, Teitelbaum has created a radio show and two films, one shown on the *Tonight Show* and the other on The Movie Channel. Harvey Shine may become the greatest show biz star who never lived.

The saga of Harvey Shine began a couple of years ago at the California Institute of the Arts where Teitelbaum, a 1982 SU grad in visual communications, was pursuing film studies. For a weekly campus radio show, Teitelbaum created his alter ego, a washed-up Hollywood legend whose friends have all achieved great stardom (usually thanks to Harvey, he'll hasten to add).

Last year, a fellow student offered Harvey the chance for a comeback. Jack Saltzberg, also in CalArt's film program, suggested that Dave-as-Harvey try to crash the Academy Awards gala by protesting that he was an old pal of all the "biggies." Saltzberg would film the event.

Dressed in an oversized tuxedo and smoking a chic cigarillo, Teitelbaum approached the entrance gate, only to be waved away again and again. But when one lethargic security guard let Harvey and his camera crew pass through and tread the red carpet, the result was a wicked lampoon with as much star power as *Entertainment Tonight*.

Rather than gush over the celebrity parade, Harvey takes potshots. *Dirty Dancing* star Patrick Swayze glides by with an entourage and merely waves. Snubbed, our emcee scowls, "Patrick and I were in dancing



Gate crasher David Teitelbaum

school together and he doesn't give me two cents today." Successful interviews include the vacuous Nicolas Cage, genial Jon Voight, Lisa Hartman, and Dudley Moore. Saltzberg edited down the two-hour film to 30 minutes and titled it *No Press Pass*.

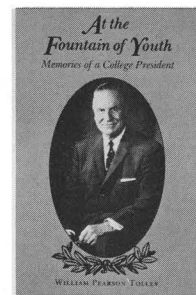
*Los Angeles Times* critic Jack Mathews hailed the satire and singled out the skinny, angular Teitelbaum, calling him "an ego-free version of David Letterman." By week's end, Teitelbaum had nearly 100 phone messages from hungry talent scouts. Teitelbaum and Saltzberg agreed to a guest spot with Johnny Carson. Segments on *Today* and Cable News Network quickly followed.

Teitelbaum says he is wary of the star system, but he hopes to use the Shine character as a springboard to other projects. He's taken a leave of absence from CalArt and signed with the agency that represents John Candy, Martin Mull, and Steven Wright.

His most recent project, commissioned by The Movie Channel, was a mock documentary about Harvey. The story takes place during the early days of television and traces the laughman's once-promising career. At the recent American Cinema Awards show, Harvey was filmed as he chatted with honorees (and, ostensibly, old friends) Bette Davis, Clint Eastwood, Donald O'Connor, and Lauren Bacall. These items were added to the short.

What next for Harvey-Dave? Further fame or immediate obscurity? The actor/director/comedian knows that Hollywood offers both alternatives. Fast-talking agents keep ringing with promises of movie roles and club appearances, but young Teitelbaum vows to remain levelheaded: "The one thing I'm learning from all this is that until something happens, it's not going to happen."

—JAY BLOTCHER



WILLIAM  
PEARSON  
TOLLEY

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